

**MINUTES OF THE  
SENIOR TAX RELIEF COMMITTEE  
CITY HALL  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
111 NORTH MAIN STREET  
MARCH 4, 2019  
7:00 p.m.**

**ATTENDEES:** Mike Aldieri, David Bujak, David Hartley, Paul Krell, Anthony Scott,  
Mayor Zoppo-Sassu, Ton DeNoto, Tom Conlin

Mayor Zoppo-Sassu called the Monday, March 4, 2019 Senior Tax Relief Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. City staff introduced themselves- DeNoto, Conlin. Committee members introduced themselves.

**ITEM #1 – To elect officers, and to take any action as necessary. (Note: The Committee should have a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary.)**

Mayor requested committee organize with a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer, but this could be done at the next meeting. Mayor excused herself to attend budget workshop but would join the meeting later.

**ITEM #2 – To discuss and establish a schedule of public hearings, meetings and times regarding the issuance of the draft report to the City Council by April 22, 2019, and to take any action as necessary.**

Assistant Corporation Counsel, Thomas Conlin briefly outlined CGS 12-129n which allows for such a committee to undertake and recommend senior tax relief, how the committee is to be organized, what its functions are, and that it must report by no later than April 22, 2019 to the City Council and Board of Finance its recommendations.

A package of materials was handed out with the statute, some materials from the Assessor including 4 ordinances from other towns which have senior tax relief programs.

**ITEM #3 – TO REVIEW CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES SECTION 12-129n**

Attorney Conlin briefly reviewed ordinances from Glastonbury, Madison, Newtown and Woodbridge. All have different eligibility "gates": income parameters differ, some are programs

with set budgets, others are capped to a percentage of the town's grand list or budget. Two have residency requirements that owners occupy the property as their primary residence for a set number of days per calendar year. Some mandate that the participants exhaust all other tax relief programs first before applying for senior tax relief. Some require that taxpayer be current on all tax bills to be eligible. The city can lien the property for the benefit.

#### **ITEM #4 – TO REVIEW THE CITY'S CURRENT TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAMS AND TO RECEIVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CITY ASSESSOR**

Assessor, Thomas DeNoto briefly described the City's current tax relief programs. Senior volunteer tax abatement program is operated through the City's Senior Services department and has about 60 participants. The program is capped by a set budget amount each year. The income thresholds are rather low to qualify. There is also the state tax program under 12-170aa which had 584 participants through last year. Originally it was set up to be reimbursed to the City by the State, but that didn't happen last year, costing the City \$ 354,583.00. Going forward it is doubtful the State will reimburse given the state budget difficulties, so it's essentially an unfunded mandate. This new program under CGS 12-129n can be "stacked" on top of any existing tax relief program as long as the total tax relief does not exceed 75 percent of the taxes owed. Based on the participation in this program we can assume all those 584 participants are automatically eligible for the new program under CGS 12-129n, so we can assume that baseline program cost is \$ 250,000.00 +/-.

Paul Krell questioned how do veteran's tax relief programs work with other tax relief programs? He is concerned about veteran eligibility being compromised or that veterans might have to choose among programs but perhaps get shortchanged not reaching maximum benefits. How does this get coordinated?

Tom DeNoto said the Assessor's office would counsel applicants to be sure that the maximum benefit is available under all programs. Again, under 12-129n the maximum amount of tax relief is 75% of the real property tax bill.

Mike Aldieri said in his experience a property lien is very negative, especially to potential heirs, and the committee might want to think carefully about liens.

David Hartley concerned about the state not funding current programs- it creates a burden shifted to taxpayers who might not be eligible for any program, though the burden might be slight, need to be sensitive to how a program like this might affect others. Hartley also expressed some concern that benefit not be given to property owners who have blight or code violations, but maybe sometimes owners need assistance to get in compliance. He also said for the projected benefit amount liens might be a lot of work for the Assessor's office, and not worth the trouble, nor in the spirit of the program's intent.

David Bujak suggested perhaps the Assessor request a set budgetary amount for this program each year instead of a percentage cap on the program to make it more predictable, it could also

make it more flexible so if more people apply and more money is needed it could be dealt with by Board of Finance and Council.

Paul Krell also asked if gaps in funding could be covered by other sources perhaps, state or federal money. Would like to assure that even persons in higher incomes could have the benefit since cost of living is higher, cost of home ownership is higher.

Attorney Conlin said if program ran out of money Assessor would have to ask for an additional appropriation from the Board of Finance.

Scotti generally favors the program but wants to study the materials from other towns, needs to be fair to everyone but sometimes folks will be left behind due to budget constraints or policy decisions on eligibility- this is a reality for many subsidized programs.

David Hartley likes the program and thinks the committee should explore a way to craft an ordinance that makes sense for the community.

General discussion about other program parameters like residency requirements, the ability for the City to lien the real property for the benefits received, and possibly changing the eligibility age upward from 65. Tom Denoto and Attorney Conlin will look at the statute more closely about age requirement.

Mayor discussed other considerations among the elderly population such as grandparents raising children with only SNAP and HUSKY insurance benefits, and the desire for elderly to age in place, so a tax relief program can help even if the benefit seems small.

Anthony Scott said even a small amount can make a big difference to fixed income persons. Agreement that the committee should meet again on Monday March 18<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM, location TBD.

#### **ITEM #5 – ADJOURN**

**IT was MOVED by Peter Krell and SECONDED by Michael Aldieri to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.**

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Dave Preleski, Chairman  
Real Estate Committee

cc: Ellen Zoppo-Sassu Mayor  
Members of the Bristol City Council  
Wyland Dale Clift, Corp. Counsel  
Jeffrey R. Steeg, Assistant Corp. Council  
Therese Pac, Town & City Clerk  
Thomas DeNoto, Assessor  
Roger Rousseau, Purchasing Agent  
Robert Flanagan, City Planner  
Ray Rogozinski, City Engineer  
Robert Longo, Superintendent Water Department

Senior Property Tax Relief Committee

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